CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CONSEIL CANADIEN DE DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Founded in 1920, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is an independent, national, non-profit organization. Through research, policy analysis, community consultation and information sharing, the CCSD provides a forum for citizen participation in the formulation of progressive social policies.

The CCSD is the only national organization whose mandate and involvement embrace all aspects of social development and social policy. Since its beginning, the Council has been actively involved in the evaluation of existing programs, the identification of essential improvements, and the promotion of needed developments. It has been a positive, non-partisan advocate of social measures such as universal inoculation, pensions, unemployment assistance, worker's compensation, medicare, legal aid, daycare, and social and cooperative housing. The Council played an active role in the development of the Canada Assistance Plan and the Child Tax Credit, and has been a promoter of the Guaranteed Annual Income concept, self-help, voluntarism and community economic development.

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The Council's diverse membership includes concerned individuals as well as representatives from business, labour, government, public and private service organizations, voluntary associations and institutions. An annual meeting of the membership reviews the year's program and financial activities. Council activities are directed by a voluntary, 39-member Board of Governors. Board members are formally elected at the annual meeting for terms of one, two and three years.

The CCSD is a major publisher in the field of social development. Publications include books, research reports, policy briefs and occasional papers, as well as four bilingual periodical publications: **Perception**, Canada's social development magazine; and three quarterly national newsletters — **Overview**, reviewing current developments in social policies and programs; **Initiative**, serving the self-help community; and **Vis-à-vis**, exploring family violence issues.

National headquarters of the Canadian Council on Social Development are located at 55 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1. Tel: (613) 728-1865. CCSD also has a Quebec office, located at 515 Viger Ave., Suite 410, Montréal, H2L 2P1. Tel: (514) 288-1687. Membership information is provided on the inside back cover.

LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DE DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL

Fondé en 1920, le CCDS est un organisme national indépendant à but non lucratif. Le Conseil encourage les citoyens à participer à l'élaboration de politiques sociales progressistes par des recherches indépendantes, des analyses de politiques, des consultations communautaires et la diffusion d'information.

Le CCDS est le seul organisme national dont le mandat et le secteur d'activités recouvrent tous les aspects du développement et de la politique à caractère social. Depuis ses débuts, le Conseil participe activement à l'évaluation des programmes actuels, à l'identification des améliorations nécessaires et à la promotion des solutions indispensables. Il s'est fait le porte-parole positif et non partisan de mesures sociales telles que les vaccins universels, les pensions, l'aide aux chômeurs, l'indemnisation des accidentés du travail, l'assurance-santé, l'aide juridique, les garderies, ainsi que le logement social et coopératif. Le Conseil a participé activement à l'élaboration du Régime d'assistance publique du Canada et du crédit d'impôt pour enfants; il a de plus appuyé les concepts du revenu annuel garanti, de l'entraide, du bénévolat et du développement des ressources communautaires.

Le CCDS est le seul organisme national de recherche, de politiques sociales et de représentation qui recrute ses membres parmi le public. L'information, les analyses, opinions et recherches produites par le Conseil découlent non seulement d'un travail technique hautement professionnel mais aussi de la réflexion et de l'expérience de membres qui représentent tous les intérêts promus par le Conseil.

Le CCDS compte des personnes intéressées et des représentants d'entreprises, de syndicats, de gouvernements, d'établissements, d'associations bénévoles, ainsi que d'organismes publics et privés offrant des services. Les membres du Conseil se réunissent chaque année afin d'examiner le programme et les activités financières du CCDS. Un bureau des gouverneurs composé de 39 membres bénévoles dirige les activités du Conseil. Les gouverneurs sont élus officiellement lors de la réunion annuelle pour un mandat d'un, deux ou trois ans.

Principal éditeur dans le secteur du développement social, le CCDS publie notamment des livres, des comptes rendus de recherches, des mémoires de politiques, des documents de réflexion, de même que quatre périodiques bilingues: **Perception**, magazine canadien sur le développement social; et trois bulletins nationaux trimestriels: **Perspectives**, sur l'actualité sociale nationale; **Initiative**, sur les groupes d'entraide et **Vis-à-vis**, sur la violence familiale.

Le siège social du Conseil canadien de Développement social est situé au 55, avenue Parkdale, Ottawa (Ontario) K1Y 4G1. Tél: (613) 728-1865. Le CCDS a aussi un bureau du Québec à Montréal, situé au 515, avenue Viger est, Bureau 410, Montréal, H2L 2P1. Tél: (514) 288-1687. On trouvera des détails complémentaires sur l'adhésion au dos de la couverture arrière.

Working for Literacy

A Handbook for Employability Projects

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

1. Employability Projects and Literacy 1

2. Dealing With Low Literacy Skills 3

3. Assessing Participants' Literacy Skills 4
   - Testing Literacy Skills 6
   - What are Your Literacy Demands? 7

4. Informal Literacy Training 8

5. Computer-Assisted Training 9

6. Computers and Literacy Training 11
   - Computer Software Programs 12

7. Formal Literacy Training 15

8. Getting the Resources You Need 16

You are the Key 17

Reading Ability Assessment Tests 19

Literacy Training Software 21

Introduction

Many community agencies and other organizations such as yours offer training to help social assistance recipients and unemployed individuals find jobs. This employability training focuses on the skills that people need to function in a job setting and to make important changes in their personal lives. Your organization may teach basic life skills such as budgeting or anger management, for example, general job-related training in office skills or computer use, or in-depth vocational training in trades such as plumbing or carpentry.

You may have found that many people who are unemployed and who need job preparation training are also unable to read and write well. But most employability projects do not want to present another barrier to people who want to find a job and so accept participants without testing them to assess whether their abilities to read and write are good enough to handle the course materials. Even if participants' skills need upgrading, they can usually gain enough from their training to find a job and become independent. But what do you do if the low literacy skills of some individuals keep them from learning or hold back the rest of the group? This manual will help you improve participants' literacy skills to their benefit and that of your project.

1. Employability Projects and Literacy

In 1990 and 1991, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), with funding from the National Literacy Secretariat of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, studied the ways in which employability projects deal with the low literacy skills of some participants. We used the Employability Resources Network (ERN), a directory of over 500 employability projects in Canada which CCSD developed with the Coopers and Lybrand Consulting Group and the Norton Group, to identify projects that provide literacy training to participants. We then interviewed the managers of 60 of the 100 projects that said literacy training formed a part of their program, to find out what challenges, successes and limitations they face as they try to improve participants' literacy skills as part of employment preparation.

We visited five projects which offer computer-assisted literacy training and met with the staff and students to learn more about how technology affects literacy and other employment training. We rounded out the study by reviewing the literature on literacy, employability and poverty, and by interviewing thirty managers from projects that do not provide literacy training.

We discovered that literacy training is an integral part of employment preparation, even when projects do not have structured literacy classes. Project managers pointed out that almost everything they do – from teaching nutrition to searching through job advertisements –

involves literacy. If people have trouble with these tasks, staff members make special efforts to help out. So employability projects are front-line centres for literacy training!

We realized that the information we had collected could be of use to other employability projects. We developed this manual to help project managers:

- identify participants whose limited reading and writing skills keep them from benefitting from the employment training;
- help participants improve their literacy skills by increasing the literacy content of some activities or by bringing literacy instructors into the program; and,
- get the resources they need to deal with the literacy training needs of their participants.

The experiences related to CCSD researchers by project managers show that employability projects are ideal centres for literacy training. You can use many of the exercises in your courses to teach literacy skills. And we found that participants trust employability project staff, appreciate the holistic approach taken in most projects, and feel comfortable working with others who share their desire to become independent.

You do not have to become a literacy expert to help participants improve their abilities to read and write. There are simple ways to give people the opportunity to sharpen these skills. The information that follows will help you open another door of opportunity for many of your project's participants by helping them become more literate.

The next seven sections of this manual will help you decide whether you should introduce formal literacy training into your project or increase the amount of informal literacy training that you are already doing:

- Section two talks about the consequences of low literacy skills for participants and for employability projects.
- Section three will help you assess whether individuals' literacy skills are sufficient to let them feel comfortable in your program and recommends that the project's literacy demands be measured.
- Section four highlights ways in which you are already providing literacy training, in life skills and work skills programs.
- Section five discusses the benefits and drawbacks of computer-assisted training.

- Section six deals with computer-assisted literacy training programs. It will help you choose literacy software.
- Section seven explains how to bring formal literacy training into your program.
- Section eight will help you get the financial and other resources you need to offer literacy training in your program.

2. Dealing With Low Literacy Skills

The literature on literacy and employability indicates that about fifty per cent of all social assistance recipients have low literacy skills. Low literacy is also closely associated with unemployment and poverty. So it was no surprise to find that employability project managers are very concerned about some participants' low literacy skills. Although the managers indicated that about three per cent of participants are unable to read or write at all, they said that 25 per cent have literacy skills that allow them to function at about a grade 4 level. Another 53 per cent have literacy skills equivalent to grades 5 to 9.

Low literacy skills can reduce the benefits these participants get from the employability training and can interfere with the project's training program. When some participants cannot handle all the materials, project staff may have to slow down the pace of the course to accommodate their needs. This can frustrate other participants whose literacy skills are good enough to handle all the training demands. To complete the course in the time scheduled, project staff may also have to limit the amount of employment training they provide. If this happens, all participants can lose out.

Employability project managers told us they do not exclude people from their courses just because their reading and writing skills need improvement. But you might find it difficult to meet your objectives when some participants cannot handle the course's reading and writing demands. We found that project staff deal with this kind of situation by:

- limiting the reading and writing demands made on participants, or
- using opportunities to improve participants' literacy skills.

When people enrolled in employability projects are offered literacy training in addition to work skills courses, they gain an ability to continue learning. So employability projects can offer participants the potential to get a job today and to train for a better job tomorrow.

Low literacy skills:

- are associated with poverty and unemployment
- keep people from benefitting from employability training
- can slow the pace of learning for all participants

3. Assessing Participants' Literacy Skills

People do not walk into employability projects and proclaim that they cannot read. And the organizations that refer them to your project are often unaware that the individuals' literacy skills are not good enough to deal with the course content. You may find out that the person has difficulty with reading and writing tasks if you contact a reference person or review the individual's school records. Even if you do not have access to this kind of information, you usually find out about people's low literacy skills in time. There are early signs that may indicate whether a person needs literacy upgrading to handle your course or to get a job.

When you give intake or application forms to potential participants who cannot read and write well, they may ask if they can return them another day. They want to get someone they trust to help them complete the form. Others may take a long time to complete the form or come up with reasons to avoid completing it themselves. They may say they've forgotten their glasses or that they cannot write because of a recent arm or hand injury. Some people may ask for help in completing the form, saying that they "always have trouble with forms."

Although the way in which people deal with forms is a good indicator of whether or not their literacy skills are adequate for your course, it can be embarrassing for people who have to make excuses for not reading the form and writing down their responses. For some people that experience may be enough to keep them from taking a program. You can avoid giving people forms to complete unless you know that the individuals can read and write well enough to complete them on their own. Invite people to respond to a counsellor's questions instead, and leave it to the counsellor to complete the form during the interview.

This approach was recommended by The John Howard Society of Canada in its publications *Taking Down the Wall of Words*, Parts I and II. These guides advise community agencies to reduce their literacy demands and change the way they run their programs so people with low literacy skills can use their services without embarrassment. You may want to refer to these two guides to ensure that your practices do not intimidate potential participants who are concerned about their inability to read and write well. The guides are available free of charge from The John Howard Society, 55 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 1E5.

If you cannot tell at the time of registration whether participants have low literacy skills, you may be able to assess their skills later on. The project orientation period is a good opportunity to observe participants' behaviour for signs of low literacy. People who do not feel comfortable with the learning process tend to show it. If they do not participate actively, it may be because they do not understand your instructions and are unable to deal with the literacy demands of your project.

People with low literacy skills often:

- wait to see what others do instead of following written instructions
- choose not to read aloud
- do not know how to use community services they need
- fear going to job interviews
- show a high level of frustration and anger in their relationships.

Employability projects give participants an opportunity to work with and trust new people. In the project's easy-going environment, they can admit to their low literacy skills. They may also become aware that they are not the only ones with a literacy problem. People who feel at ease in the group and with the project may feel comfortable enough to come forward and disclose their literacy limitations to a counsellor.

How you present tasks that require literacy is an important part of your efforts to make people feel comfortable. By developing ways to reduce your literacy demands in the early part of the course, participants get to know you and the group so that they feel they are able to talk to you about this personal issue. If you can offer people alternatives to reading and writing tasks, you will help people with low literacy skills feel more comfortable with you and the course.

You can design courses to take the literacy burden off participants. Some projects divide people into working groups to deal with assignments in a variety of ways. One group may be asked to read pamphlets about job search techniques and report back, for example, while another group "brainstorms" to come up with innovative ways to find employment opportunities. If you divide groups in this way, you should not, of course, label them according to their literacy skills or demands. You should offer all participants the choice of groups, allowing them to indicate whether they prefer to read quietly or work with others in a group. The John Howard Society guides offer more ideas on alternatives to reading and writing tasks.

Project managers say that many participants report a higher level of education than their literacy skills seem to indicate. This may be because people's reading and writing skills can erode if they are not used. So an individual who has completed grade 8, but who has been unemployed or had jobs that did not require much reading and writing, may only be able to read at a grade 4 or 5 level. In contrast we found that, when people are asked to rate their

own literacy skills, many say that their skills are very poor when in fact they are not. Some people believe they can only handle the simplest of words and phrases, but testing proves they have a good reading vocabulary and can deal with longer phrases and sentences.

People with low literacy skills often:

- do not want to complete forms
- do not participate actively in your program
- are fearful of situations that challenge their literacy abilities
- report a higher level of education than their skills seem to indicate
- tend to underestimate their literacy skills

Testing Literacy Skills

Testing people to determine their approximate educational level and literacy skills is useful and important. Because you cannot usually rely on referring organizations or the participants themselves to rate their literacy skills accurately, you need an objective assessment of each individual's abilities. If you test people at the start of your project, you will have a better idea of how you will need to structure your course. If most participants have low literacy skills, for example, you may want the entire group to work on activities that build these skills. If only one or two people need to improve these abilities, you might offer specialized, individual workshop sessions.

Testing can also help you assess whether a person has a learning disability or other neurological disorder that can interfere with traditional learning methods. Some projects which test people at the outset and again after literacy training, refer people for learning disability testing if they have made no measurable progress in learning to read. Learning disabilities usually require specialized approaches to training.

There are numerous assessment tests that you can use to determine individuals' reading levels. Some tests that employability projects mentioned are the California Achievement Test (CAT), and the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). We have listed a number of assessment tests in Appendix A. We discovered that projects generally call on professionals from literacy training organizations or community colleges to administer and interpret these tests. Some organizations get together to engage one person to do all the formal testing for them.

What are Your Literacy Demands?

For test results to be meaningful and relevant to your needs, you must have a realistic idea of your project's literacy demands. Do people need grade 8 reading skills to get through your course? Are grade 5-level skills sufficient, or must people have completed grade 10? By evaluating your own program you can get a better idea of how much literacy upgrading people will need to benefit from the training you provide.

You may already know at what grade level your project operates. If so, you can tell whether someone's grade 6 skills will be sufficient for your grade 8 program. If you make a few changes to the teaching program, and give the person some informal literacy training, grade 6 skills may be perfectly adequate. Someone with grade 3- or 4-level skills, on the other hand, may find your course content too difficult and become discouraged. By knowing the level at which your course operates and by testing people's literacy skills at the outset, you can plan better and keep people from becoming discouraged by training that is beyond their capabilities.

If your project lasts only a short time, from one to four months, for example, you may not be able to help people upgrade their skills significantly. With informal or formal literacy courses, however, you may be able to give them the incentive to continue learning. Project managers told us that some participants, once they have found employment, return to the employability projects for literacy upgrading. Others go on to take literacy courses in the community, especially if they have been introduced to instructors from these programs.

In longer employability projects, formal literacy training can help participants make important gains in their literacy skills. And testing gives people proof that their abilities are improving. Professional literacy instructors will caution them that progress is likely to be slow, but they can help participants recognize their new accomplishments in improved reading and writing skills.

If you would like to get an objective assessment of your project's literacy demands, you can invite a literacy or education professional to look over your course materials and review your teaching methods. Through such a "literacy audit," the professional can also suggest ways you can restructure some activities to make them more accessible to people with low literacy skills. If, for example, your project generally operates at a grade 8 level, it is important for you to know that one of the manuals you are using is written at the grade 10 or 11 level.

Testing participants' literacy skills:

- helps you structure and plan your courses
- helps detect learning disabilities
- lets people know how much progress they are making
- is most useful if you have assessed your projects' literacy demands

4. Informal Literacy Training

You can use many of your course exercises to informally develop participants' literacy skills. Without designing a separate literacy training program, you can coach people in reading, writing and numeracy skills. Many of the project managers we surveyed, even those who said that they do not provide separate literacy training courses, mentioned examples of literacy-related training activities in their projects.

Life skills courses are particulary important opportunities for participants to learn literacy skills that are applicable in their daily lives. These courses cover such things as problem solving, anger management, conflict resolution, family-related issues and budgeting. In some projects, life skills courses also help participants develop job-search techniques as they try to find job placements for the on-the-job training portion of their employment preparation. Some of the literacy skills that are developed in life skills courses are:

Life management skills -

- using the telephone directory
- depositing a pay cheque
- balancing a cheque book
- shopping and budgeting

Job search skills -

- preparing for job interviews
- writing résumés and covering letters
- filling in job applications
- reading newspaper job advertisements

Office skills -

- keeping records of class work
- taking minutes of group meetings

The project managers we interviewed consider life skills training, which often involves interaction with others, to be a very effective means of improving participants' literacy skills. These courses enhance their self-confidence, teach them to set goals and motivate them to learn. Life skills courses also reinforce new literacy skills through practical activities such as shopping and budgeting.

Informal literacy training can occur in:

- life skills courses
- job search activities
- class record-keeping activities

5. Computer-Assisted Training

Many employability projects use computers to teach life skills and work skills. Research has shown that computer training can be four times as effective as traditional remedial instruction! With computers, participants can work at their own pace, do exercises designed for their specific needs and can make mistakes and correct them in private. As they master the technology, they develop a sense of their own importance and ability to learn. With a personalized computer program, people are able to apply information they already know to learn new work or life skills while becoming "computer literate." Computer training is also a very important part of job preparation. Employers often want job applicants to have at least a basic familiarity with computer technology.

Project managers advised us of important limitations to the use of computers in employability projects. In their experience, some older participants and some people in rural areas are "terrified by" computers and should be given the option of using traditional training methods. Where people's fears can be overcome, however, they felt it was important not to let too long a period of time pass between the announcement that the project will use computers and the first time participants get to use a terminal. If people have two weeks to worry about learning the new skill, they may try to avoid it, perhaps by dropping out of the course. The

managers suggested giving people a "hands-on" experience with computers soon after the subject is brought up.

With some of the new computer programs, you can help participants deal with serious personal problems you may have thought were beyond the scope of your project. Computers can ask people privately about such issues as drug abuse or family violence and suggest ways for them to change their attitudes and behaviour. In fact, project managers said participants "listen to" things from the computer that they would not accept from a counsellor and "say" things to the computer that they wouldn't admit to a staff member. Managers also told us that dealing with these issues is an important part of their approach in preparing people for employment. Counselling assistance is consistent with the holistic approach to training adopted by most projects.

Working on a computer gives participants a great incentive to learn. They are often proud to tell people they are learning to use a computer. Many people enjoy the video game approach in some programs and want to improve their writing skills so they can use more of the programs. Participants who learn to use word processing software tend to do lots of writing. They practice their skills in résumé preparation, for example, so that they can become more adept in word processing. Although they may not be able to learn new writing skills from the program, the practice work is helpful and they can use spell check and grammar check features to some benefit. And participants whose handwriting is poor find they can produce professional-looking work on the computer.

If you are introducing computer-based training for the first time, make sure you build in sufficient time for instructor training. Even professional educators and literacy teachers may not be familiar with the computers and software you have chosen.

Computer-assisted training:

- can be four times as effective as traditional remedial instruction
- prepares participants to use computers on the job
- can help people deal with serious problems in private
- gives people an incentive to learn

6. Computers and Literacy Training

Many employability projects include formal literacy training as part of their course work. They may offer participants a series of self-directed training options for a set period each day. While some people use the time for their job search or life skills exercises, for example, others can concentrate on building their literacy skills.

Computers are often a central feature of this training. They provide individualized learning experiences and lots of opportunities for practice. Managers believe that, while computers cannot replace good instructors and personal attention, they provide participants with a modern learning experience that may be a sharp contrast to negative school experiences. The computer programs are interactive and responsive to learners' needs. Some commercial software programs that teach reading, writing and math also include exercises that are useful in life skills training. Grammar Gremlin, for example, deals with anger and conflict resolution. It teaches patience and demonstrates that, even if you become frustrated, you cannot walk away from problems.

Some of the advantages of computer-based training that project managers identified are listed below:

Computer-Assisted Instruction:

Makes learning enjoyable -

- by helping learners overcome fears and anxieties from past failures
- by motivating learners with games and graphics
- by stimulating learners to think creatively

Provides tailor-made teaching -

- by letting slower learners proceed at their own pace, minimizing time pressures and frustrations
- by challenging advanced students with a greater variety of learning modules

Provides a new experience -

- by encouraging and expanding learners' curiosity
- by teaching practical life skills
- by increasing learners' employability – more and more employers want workers who have a hands-on familiarity with computers.

Some managers told us that they designed their "computer room" with private cubicles where participants could work on their own and instructors could check in periodically. Since many people who have been out of the workforce for some time are often uneasy working with others, they thought this private study arrangement would be ideal. To their surprise, participants have tended to work together, coaching each other and solving problems on the computers. The managers see this as a very positive development in improving participants' social skills as well as their literacy and work skills.

Computer Software Programs

There are many literacy training software programs available. Some can be more easily adjusted to learners' needs and interests, or require more learner-teacher contact than others. Unfortunately, much of the existing software uses graphics that are suitable for children, not for adults. And the wide range of reading abilities among employability project participants is beyond the scope of some computer software programs. Some people may find a program to be far below their reading level, while others find it too difficult.

There are a number of things you should think about when choosing a computer-assisted literacy training package. You may want to ensure that the program you choose includes:

- a diagnostic ability
- a variety of approaches to learning tasks
- an ability to customize the training objectives
- an ability to incorporate your reading materials into the software.

The diagnostic test in your program should assess the kinds of difficulties each learner has. People may need to focus on grammar skills, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation, for example. A variety of approaches to learning is important, because individuals learn in different ways. Some people may prefer a strong graphics element in their exercises, while others need auditory support. Many adult learners seem to prefer exercises that focus on listening skills to accompany the reading skills, because they feel this approach builds on their strengths.

Be clear about your literacy training objectives. Some programs are designed to help people pass the Grade Equivalency Diploma (GED) or improve their basic skills. If you need a wide range of reading and writing levels, you may need to buy more than one program, but there are some that are very comprehensive. If, on the other hand, you want to be able to prepare people for entry to a nursing program, you will want to customize your learning package. Make sure the program you choose allows you to use your own reading materials. In this way, learners can become accustomed to dealing with medical terminology or other specialized information.

Projects that have worked with computer-based literacy training programs for some time have found that participants have clear preferences in software programs. They may not want to use basic skills software that is oriented towards children. Projects often find that participants prefer word processing programs to even the most sophisticated literacy programs. They realize these computer skills will be useful to them in their careers as well as during the learning process. Some of the computer programs currently used by employability projects are listed in the box on the next page.

Managers cautioned that some software programs are not appropriate for people with learning difficulties or disabilities. They have found that programs which include music, for example, can be very distracting for some people. You may find that you need a variety of software programs to meet participants' learning needs.

Computer-assisted literacy training:

- makes learning enjoyable
- provides tailor-made teaching

Computer software programs should include:

- a diagnostic ability
- a variety of approaches to learning
- customized training objectives
- your own reading materials as part of the learning package

Computer Software Programs

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF is a life skills program that teaches the effects of missing work and how one missed responsibility can snowball into a complex of serious problems.

AUTO SKILLS uses a written exercise and an on-screen program to assess participants' learning needs. It is a personalized program, with ten levels of oral reading exercises and eight levels of mathematics. Oral reading activities include visual and auditory matching exercises. The mathematics module teaches operations such as addition and subtraction, geometry, fractions, equations and measurements.

PATHFINDER is a "turnkey" integrated learning system that links a network of computers. It includes the computers, software, a management system and print support materials.

PERFECT COPY is a grammar skills program dealing with such subjects as abbreviations, commas and words people often misuse.

PLATO is considered a very comprehensive program of basic literacy and life skills modules. Most program participants find the life skills module to be relevant to their lives and an incentive to read.

SKILLS BANK is an all-purpose instruction program. It reviews 286 basic reading, writing, math and study skills from grade levels 3 to 7. Instructors can select subjects such as grammar, spelling, math and communication skills, that respond to individuals' learning needs.

SPELL IT, GRAMMAR GREMLINS, WORD ATTACK, SPEED READER, MATH BUSTER, VERB VIPER and WIZARD OF WORDS are commercial software programs that work like video games.

7. Formal Literacy Training

When project staff realize that some participants need to upgrade their literacy skills, they don't usually refer them to literacy courses in the community. The individuals have learned to trust the project staff and often prefer to remain in an environment they know. So one option that many projects choose is to invite literacy professionals to teach a course in the project.

You can recruit instructors from community or national literacy training programs or community colleges. They can tailor their courses to suit the needs of participants by using learning materials such as first aid manuals or community newspapers, which participants will find interesting and useful. Some projects also invite speakers to address the group on issues such as child care, job safety or money management. The handbooks or booklets they bring along can also be used later as resource materials for assignments.

When discussing your project's literacy training needs with an outside instructor, make sure he or she is willing and able to tailor the course to the group's interests. Participants will be more interested in courses that relate to the subjects they are studying in your program and to elements of their everyday lives.

If you provide literacy training to people on an individual basis, it will be important for the instructor to take a flexible approach to timing the training sessions. Some participants may be able to attend classes only on weekends or in the evenings. Some will be able to devote ten hours a week to literacy training, but others will have trouble finding two hours. When participants have part-time jobs, families to care for, or other responsibilities, literacy training must be set around their schedule. Some literacy instructors may also be willing to offer training in people's homes. This can be of benefit to many learners.

If you bring formal literacy courses into your program:

- recruit an instructor from a literacy program or a community college
- use materials relevant to your program
- ensure that training times meet students' needs

8. Getting the Resources You Need

Employability project managers told us that they are often strapped for funding to operate their core programs and cannot afford to add additional literacy training or computer-based courses. Other managers told us of innovative strategies they used to get the resources they needed. In one instance, a project let it be known that it needed computers for literacy training. People who heard they were starting up a computer program told them they could have "that old computer in the back." The project started out with four Macintosh computers, four Apples, eight Icons, one IBM clone and one "old Commodore." They have now progressed to a single, integrated system that is flexible enough to meet learners' varying needs. Such a "turnkey" operation provides a complete package of computers, software, a management system and all the print material.

Projects that provide literacy training often find that participants need extra resources to follow the additional courses. If their literacy training is at night, for example, they may need extra bus tickets or taxi fare and child care funding. And the projects themselves need money for manuals, computers, software, training for course instructors and other expenses. Some projects that receive funding from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) under the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) told us they include these expenses in their budgets. Other projects weren't sure if they could do this. Because CJS policies respond to local and regional needs, support for literacy training varies across the country. Check with your local or regional CEIC office to find out what support you may be able to get. Participants in your project who are receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits or who are eligible for CJS benefits can also claim allowances for literacy training.

CEIC is developing a literacy policy that recognizes the importance of literacy training in preparing individuals for employment. In addition to funding under the CJS and UI programs, the policy supports a limited number of community agency-based literacy programs and workplace literacy training. The policy also provides for the determination of clients' literacy needs during the counselling process at Canada Employment Centres.

Get the resources you need:

- Try to get "that old computer in the back."
- Include literacy training programs in your Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) budget if you can.
- Make sure that participants receive the Unemployment Insurance and CJS allowances to which they are entitled.

You are the Key

Enrolling in an employability program can be the most important step an unemployed person or social assistance recipient may take to become self-sufficient. Along with vocational, business and life skills, participants in your project may need help in upgrading their literacy skills. You do not have to become an expert in literacy or a literacy instructor to make such instruction an integral part of your employment preparation training. We hope the suggestions in this booklet and in the two guides prepared by The John Howard Society of Canada will help you remove a few more barriers to employment for the people you serve. With support for literacy training, your work can be an even more effective tool to help disadvantaged adults move from dependency to self-reliance.

APPENDIX A

Reading Ability Assessment Tests

- **ABET, The Adult Basic Education Test**
  Adapted from the California Achievement Test.
  McGraw Hill, Ryerson Ltd., Scarborough, Ontario.

- **ABLE, The Adult Basic Learning Examination**
  Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. New York, USA.

- **BRIGANCE test**
  Curriculum Associates Inc., North Billerica, MA, USA.

- **Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test**
  Adapted by Edgar N. Wright, Nelson Canada, Scarborough, Ontario.

- **CAT, The California Achievement Test**
  California Test Bureau, Monterey, California, USA.

- **CTBS, the Canadian Test of Basic Skills**
  Adapted by Ethel M. King, Nelson Canada, Scarborough, Ontario.

- **Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests**
  Teachers College Press, New York, USA.

- **Ontario Test of Adult Functional Literacy**
  Centre for Adult Literacy, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario.

- **Ottawa Board of Education English as a Second Language Test**
  This test has been used for immigrants and others.

- **Reading for Everyday Activities of Life**
  Westwood Publishing, New York City. The Canadian version of this test is under development by Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario.

- **Teach Someone to Read**
  Diagnostic test developed by Nadine Rosenthal in her book, *Teach Someone to Read.*

Reading Ability Assessment Tests

- Woodcock-Johnson Test
  Richard W. Woodcock, American Guidance Service, Publishers' Building, Circle Pines, MN, USA.

- WRAT, The Wide Range Achievement Test
  Jastak Publishing, Willmingston, DE, U.S.A.

APPENDIX B

Literacy Training Software

Canadian Education Association

Inventory of Literacy Software, a comprehensive inventory of literacy software. Ottawa, Ontario

Canadian Education Association

Literature Review, Computer Software for Literacy Project, prepared by Audrey Thomas, Literacy Consultant, Victoria, B.C., for Shannon and McCall Consulting Ltd., White Rock, B.C.

Fanshawe College

National Adult Literacy Database, an on-line database, London, Ontario

George Brown, The City College: Academic CAL Centre.

Computer-Assisted Learning and the Ontario Basic Skills Program: Teaching Methodology, Annotated Software Evaluations. Ontario Ministry of Skills Development, 1988.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

Bringing Literacy Within Reach: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities. Provides an informal screening procedure and teaching strategies for individuals working with the adult student. Includes subsections on reading, written expression, spelling, numeracy and calculation. (Approx. 150 pages, $25.00) Available Autumn 1991, from the Association, 200-323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7Z2.

The Canadian Council on Social Development

Membership Information

AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL,

- you support work aimed at improving our social and economic environment;
- you participate in a network of people who share your social commitment;
- you are continuously informed of innovative ideas and major developments as they occur.

YOU ARE ENTITLED TO:

- **Perception**, our bilingual magazine on social development;
- Three quarterly national newsletters
  Overview, a review of social issues, trends and programs in Canada,
  Initiative, serving the self-help community;
  Vis-à-vis, exploring developments in the field of family violence;
- Preferential rates for participation in Council conferences and workshops;
- Information on new publications;
- The Council's annual report;
- Voting privileges at annual meetings;
- 20% off our regular prices for books and reports.

Membership Fees	
Individuals:	
• Students	$10
• Participating	$50
• Sustaining	$75
Organizations:	
Annual budget	
• less than $100,000	$ 75
• $100,001 to $300,000	$125
• over $300,000	$200
• Affiliate	$500
Libraries:	$50
Municipalities:	
• per 1,000 population (minimum fee $100	$2.50

To become a member, provide us with your name, the name of your organization (if applicable), complete address, membership category, and send along with your cheque to: CCSD Membership Services, 55 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1. Telephone: (613) 728-1865.

The CCSD is a non-profit organization registered under the Tax Act relating to charities; tax receipts are issued for all donations and financial contributions.

Le Conseil canadien de Développement social

Les adhésions

EN TANT QUE MEMBRE DU CONSEIL,

- vous appuyez des efforts visant à améliorer notre contexte social et économique;
- vous faites partie d'un réseau de personnes partageant votre engagement social;
- vous êtes tenu(e) au courant des idées innovatrices et de l'actualité.

DE PLUS, VOUS RECEVEZ :

- **Perception**, notre revue bilingue de développement social;
- trois bulletins trimestriels nationaux
  Perspectives, qui examine les questions, tendances et programmes sociaux au Canada;
  Initiative, qui s'adresse aux réseaux d'entraide;
  Vis-à-vis, qui fait le point sur l'actualité en matière de violence familiale;
- des tarifs préférentiels lors de votre participation aux conférences et aux ateliers du Conseil;
- des renseignements sur les nouvelles publications;
- le rapport annuel du Conseil;
- le droit de vote à l'assemblée annuelle;
- 20% de réduction sur tous les livres et les rapports.

Catégories et frais d'adhésion	
Particuliers :	
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• par millier d'habitants (frais minimum 100$)	2.50$

Pour devenir membre, veuillez envoyer votre nom, celui de votre organisme (le cas échéant), votre adresse complète, la catégorie d'adhésion et votre chèque à l'adresse suivante : CCDS, Services aux membres, 55, avenue Parkdale, Ottawa (Ontario) K1Y 4G1. Téléphone : (613) 728-1865.

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